

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHAM #0517 0560656
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 250656Z FEB 09
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4551

S E C R E T AMMAN 000517

SIPDIS

FOR NEA/ELA, NEA/IPA, AND FOR SENATOR MITCHELL
ALSO PASS TO NSC FOR SHAPIRO AND PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/25/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR SE MITCHELL'S FEBRUARY 28 VISIT TO
JORDAN

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S) Summary: Foremost on the King's mind are Israeli efforts to form a new government and how the results would affect progress toward peace. The King will also want to know of any developments in the U.S. strategic approach toward Iran and Syria, which could trigger a shift in Jordan's approach toward these actors and Islamist groups, including Hamas. The King may raise ongoing Saudi-Syria discussions on reconciliation and his concern that a mending of relations should extend to the entire moderate Arab bloc, not just Saudi Arabia. Your visit comes in the wake of the February 23 reshuffle of Prime Minister Nader Al-Dahabi's cabinet, including the foreign minister. End Summary.

Possibilities for Peace

¶2. (C) King Abdullah will focus his attention on developments in the U.S. approach to peace, given election results in Israel that he and others here expect will translate into a Binyamin Netanyahu-led government. From the King on down, our Jordanian contacts worry that such a government will reject the generally accepted parameters of peace talks, including the most basic goal of Palestinian statehood. Some Jordanians have assessed that the electorate's rightward shift showed Israel's "true face" and have cited Netanyahu's stated preference to focus on economic peace rather than immediately proceeding to final status solutions. The King believes Israel has limited time to get a deal on good terms before demographic and attitudinal shifts in the Palestinian body politic undermine Israel's negotiating position.

Consultation on Iran and Syria

¶3. (C) The King will also want to know about any developments in the U.S. strategic approach toward Iran and Syria. The recent Congressional delegations that met with Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad have made Jordan especially uneasy. Believing the U.S. is predisposed toward engagement, Jordanian officials have avoided forthrightly rejecting such overtures, but they remain deeply concerned that Iran and Syria will be the only ones to benefit. Re-engagement would also likely trigger a review of Jordan's relationship with Iran and Syria, in addition to Islamic groups including Hamas, with which Jordan held limited security talks in the second half of 2008. From Jordan's perspective, the U.S. would benefit in pressing Israel to proceed to final status negotiations, garnering Arab support to deal with shared security concerns about Iran.

Position of Arab Moderates

¶4. (S) Jordan continues to see real movement toward a

two-state solution as the key to bolstering and expanding the moderate Arab bloc, but our interlocutors have cited a few positives signs for the moderate trend since your last visit.

The King and Chief of the Royal Court Nasser Al-Lozi visited Saudi Arabia February 19 and 20 and learned about an uptick in Saudi-Syrian contacts aimed at reconciliation. According to Lozi, the Saudis see a few encouraging signs from Qatar and even more from Syria, including evincing a willingness to accept Arab League language supportive of the Arab Peace Initiative and of Egyptian efforts to mediate with Hamas. Jordan's position is that any reconciliation with Syria should extend to the entire moderate Arab bloc, not just Saudi Arabia. Jordan is worried that a bilateral Saudi-Syrian reconciliation would peel Saudi Arabia off from the moderate bloc while Syria continues attacks on others in the group. The King continues to seek a visit to Washington, particularly given his assessment that the image of a meeting with the President would help convince a disillusioned public that moderation results in influence with Washington.

Cabinet Reshuffle

15. (C) Your visit comes in the wake of the February 23 reshuffle of Prime Minister Nader Al-Dahabi's cabinet, including Foreign Minister Saleh Al-Bashir who has been replaced by former Minister of State for Media Affairs Nasser Joudeh.

Visit Amman's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/amman/>
Beecroft